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Cross-Cultural Christian Discipling

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Catalogue Description:

Symbols, stories, rites, ceremonies, and other aspects of a variety of religious traditions provide insight and, in some cases, models for the task of Christian discipling. Students will construct their own structures for the discipling task based upon these insights and models. Three hours.

Human Religion and the Discipling Task

The religious dimension of a culture provides its people with conceptions of reality and the means for maintaining the force and relevance of those conceptions. Features of a culture's repertoire such as story, scripture, rites of passage, pilgrimages, worship traditions, social organizations, and other symbolic activities shape the worldview of its people. The cross-cultural study of religion examines the religious dimension of culture with a view to understanding its nature and function. The course, assuming that religiousness is a universal aspect of human identity and using the tools and results of religious studies, explores the relevance of some of the forms typical of human religions for the process of forming Christian believers as individuals and as members of communities of faith into the image of God's son.

Goals:

1. The student will be able to reflect in a reaction paper accurately the following concepts:
 - 1.1 the meaning of religion as elucidated by Folkert (1991);
 - 1.2 the meaning of Eliade's (1959) *homo religiosus* and the way in which, according to him, humans sanctify space, time, natural phenomena, and the processes and stages of living; and
 - 1.3 the meaning of the ritual process as presented by Turner (1971), including the concepts rites of passage, liminality, and *communitas*.
2. Students will be able to illustrate these concepts from Neihardt's (1988) *Black Elk Speaks*.
3. Students will be able to analyze a phenomenon of their own choosing according to one or more of these concepts.
4. Students will gain confidence in their ability to apply this analysis to the task of discipling.

Note: The instructor hopes that students will feel free to deal with the materials of the course critically. The analysis and application can be thought of in dialectical terms in which the material examined in the seminar may be used to stimulate a more effective discipling process.

Common Readings:

Eliade, Mircea

- 1959 *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Trans. Willard R. Trask New York: Harcourt, Brace & World

Folkert, Kendall W., ed. by John E. Cort

- 1991 "A Thematic Course in the Study of Religion," John B. Carman and Steven P. Hopkins, eds. *Tracing Common Themes: Comparative Courses in the Study of Religion. Studies in the Humanities*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 19-36

Neihardt, John G.

- 1988 *Black Elk Speaks*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press [originally published 1932]

Turner, Victor

- 1977 *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure. Symbol. Myth and Ritual*, ed. Victor Turner. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press

Zahniser, A. H. Mathias

- 1997 *Symbol and Ceremony: Making Disciples Across Cultures*. Monrovia, CA: MARC Publications.

A Research Paper

Each student will produce a standard research paper of between 15 and 25 pages, including notes and bibliography. The paper will present a proposal for a discipling event or process making use of a model growing out of the seminar. Careful attention will be given in the evaluation to form following the standards set in Slade, 10th. ed. (1997). Structure will also be important with attention given to thesis statement, use of sources, and the organization of the argument. Papers will be due in a first draft form on the week before their respective writers are due to give their presentations in class. The evaluation of the first draft and the evaluation of the in-class presentation will be averaged with the evaluation of the final paper to produce a final grade.

Evaluation

Grades will be based upon written responses to the reading assignments (50%), the first draft of the paper, the oral report in class, and the research paper (50%). Late assignments will result in a grade reduction and little or no feedback from the instructor.

Class Schedule by Weeks

All classes meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-1:50. All assignments unless otherwise indicated are to be read before the date on which they are listed. Assignments with an asterisk involve answering questions from a study guide. These represent the theoretical meat of the course.

1. **Religion, Religious Studies, and Discipling the Nations**
 - **September 8 & 10:** Introduction to the Course: Modern Theists and Traditional Religious People. Biblical Background: The Great Commission and Religious Studies. Read Neihardt (1988) at least chapters 1-3, and Zahniser (1997) chapters 1, 2, and Conclusion.
 - **September 15 & 17:** A Working Definition of Religion Applicable to the Process of Christian Discipling. Readings: Folkert (1991),* Neihardt (1988) chapters 4-14, and Zahniser (1997), ch. 5.
2. ***Homo Religiosus*:** The Essential Religiousness of Humanity and Christian Discipling. Please finish Neihardt (1988) and read Zahniser (1997), chs. 3 and 4 by the end of this unit.
 - **September 22 & 24:** Sacred Space and Making the World Sacred: Eliade (1959) Introduction and Chapter 1.*
 - **September 29 & October 1:** Sacred Time and Myths: Eliade (1959) ch. 2.*
 - **October 6 & 8:** Sacred Nature and Cosmic Religion: Eliade (1959) Ch. 3.*
 - **October 13 & 15:** Human Existence and Sanctified Life: Eliade (1959) Ch. 4.*
3. **The Rite of Passage Structure:** The Discipling Potential of Liminality.
 - **October 20 & 22: The Structure of a Rite of Passage and The Shin Byu.** Read: Turner (1977) Chapters 1 and 2,* and Zahniser (1997), chapters 7 and 8. Lecture and discussion: 1. The Theoretical Model, 2. Shin Byu: a Burmese Buddhist rite of passage, and 3. A Christian Rite of Initiation into Adult Church Membership. You might peak into chapter 12 of Zahniser [1997]).
 - **October 27 & 29: The Rite of Passage Structure and the Pilgrimage:** Read: Turner (1977), chapters 3 and 4,* and Zahniser (1997), chapter 10. Lecture and discussion: 1. The Theoretical Model 2. *Hajj* (Islamic pilgrimage) 3. Makutano
 - **November 3 & 5: Periodic Festivals:** The Application of the Rite of Passage Structure to Time: Read: Turner (1977) Chapter 5,* and Zahniser (1997), chapters 6 and 9. Discussion: 1. The Theoretical Model, 2. The Jewish Sabbath. On Tuesday, **November 3** we may have a presentation by Jerry Page on food in discipling, and on Thursday, **November 5**, we may have a report from Ralph Yoder on the Summer Passage experience produced by Don Joy and his students in youth ministry classes at ATS (dealt with in Zahniser [1997], chapter 6).
4. **Contributions from Class Participants.**
 - **November 10 through December 15:** Each student will present a cross-cultural discipling method and model to the class. Examples of religious structures relevant to cross-cultural discipling include

Qur'an Recitation (Islam), **The Village as Microcosm and Macrocosm** (the Dogon of W. Africa), **Mandala** (Buddhist meditative picture), **Messianic Synagogue** (Contextualized discipling), and **Ashram** (Hindu retreats). Don't forget to hand in your first draft a week before you are to present your paper. The first draft will be evaluated and handed back promptly so you can use it in your class presentation.

- 5. Bibliography:** The bibliography in Zahniser (1997:221-230) will serve as a bibliography for the course.